

BLOOMFIELD HIGH SCHOOL.

GRADUATION EXERCISES.

An Old Book.

In looking back upon our childhood, these days of happy innocence when life was a blissful pleasure-ground, through whose sunny paths we wandered at our own sweet will, knowing no evil and therefore fearing none, we perceive among the many and various delights of that period one never failing amusement.

Though all other means of amusement might fail, who of us ever wearied of listening to the enchanting tales which mamma or auntie unfolded to us? We listened with breathless attention to the thrilling adventures of the Little Red Hen, in imagination climbed the beanstalk with Jack, hid trembling in the giant's oven, and finally complacently decapitated the old tyrant. There was not one of us who could not, even before we knew our letters, take our Mother Goose books, and read the stories from beginning to end. As we grew older these stories lost their charm and gave place to others, in which gallant young princes rode forth to the rescue of their lady-loves, who were always confined in some gloomy and seemingly impenetrable old castle, guarded by terrible giants.

But the days of story-telling passed away and soon we were able to read for ourselves the wonderful tales of the Arabian Nights, and others through whose pages the fairies danced and wove their enchanting spells.

These, too, were in their turn laid aside, and we turned to the daring exploits of the old-time heroes: of bold Marmion dying on Flodden Field, of a gallant knight, of Ivanhoe, the disinherited, or of Brave Richard, the Lion-hearted. These changes in our choice of reading-matter seem naturally to be occasioned by our intellectual growth and as such would afford an interesting study.

At first we are fully satisfied with meaningless rhyme and empty jingle, and for a time live in blissful ignorance of anything higher. But soon the spell passes away. Even the charming tales of Little Bo-Peep and Little Boy Blue cease to delight us, and henceforth we devote ourselves to less fanciful narratives in which appear something of character and the controlling forces of life. Finally we reach the point where, in the domain of cultured imagination, the romance appeals most strongly to us, embodying nobility with high sense of honor and the cultivation of all the graces and virtues.

These tales of our early days are many in number, and not only do they form an essential part of our literature but by suggestion and allusion have moulded and given tone to much of greater importance that has followed. Often, in the most elaborate essay or eloquent discourse, reference will be made to some old, well-remembered incident in them, and even in sermons, such allusions make their appearance, assisting to fasten a truth in the mind of the hearer.

In this way we are reminded how, in the most important matters of life, noble and rightful use may be made of what we ordinarily might regard as a trivial element. In our studies of literature during the past year, I have met one book, which, although little read or known, has, in this way, become a treasury of inspiring story. About one hundred years before the Fairy Queen delighted the world with its graceful fancy and beautiful description, appeared a work entitled *Le Morte d'Arthur*, an account of the life, acts and death of King Arthur. According to William Caxton, its printer, "Sir Thomas Malory dyd take it out of certyn books of Frensch and reduced it into Englyshe." Of the author's history we know nothing, except that he was a knight living in the reign of Edward IV in the fifteenth century, but his simple, childlike and beautiful character, discloses itself in the wonderful conceptions that he was seeking to work out, in the manner of his writing, and in the numerous exquisite touches found throughout the narrative.

Many have been the admirers of Sir Thomas Malory. From this point even Milton did not hesitate to draw, and lesser writers, since, have found subjects upon which to expend their greatest efforts. In this history Sir Thomas tells us how the Round Table, formed by King Arthur, was a body of knightly heroes, organized for the purpose of seeking out and rescuing from the infidel hands into which it had fallen, the San Greal. This San Greal, according to the legend, was the cup used by our Lord at the Last Supper. In this cup, at the crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea caught drops of the Saviour's blood. From this disciple the charge descended to others, the condition being that the keeper must be perfectly pure. At last, by some means, the cup disappeared, and at once it became the desire of every believer to recover it. The table about which King Arthur's Knights were accustomed to gather, and from which they received their name, furnished seats for one hundred and fifty; but story tells us that only one hundred and twenty-eight ever were occupied at once, for none might belong but those who were valiant in arms, true to the right and blameless in life. He who would join the honored band must be chaste in thought, in word and in deed. On the field he must be brave and fearless in action, gentle and courteous in speech. Much of each knight's time was to be given to exploits in arms, in which, putting champions of Christianity, while serving down evil, defending the weak and delivering the oppressed, they kept prominently before them their great object, the search for the Holy Grail, and far and wide through many countries and climes, they sought it. At the head of this body of knights, appeared the mythical hero, King Arthur, who, legend asserts, was sovereign of entire England during the sixth century.

Devotion to him was marked in his followers and special mention is made of the courtesy and love paid him by Sir Launcelot, the most lovely character of the Round Table, who even when compelled by circumstances to fight against the king, made it his aim to preserve him from danger, never returning the blows received, and when the king was unhorsed, dismounting to lift him to his seat again in safety. Connected with all the knights of the Round Table, there is something of indefiniteness. The persons themselves are quite lost behind the quality or virtue which they represent, and their history, therefore, partakes something of the nature of an allegory. The value of the book to us rests upon this fact. Sir Thomas aimed to ennoble and honor true excellence of character. He considers that the readers of this book should greatly desire to accustom themselves in the following of these gracious, knightly deeds: that is to dread God, faithfully and courageously to serve their country and the more that God hath given them the triumphal honor, the meeker they should be, ever fearing the unsteadiness of this deceitful world.

King Arthur, Sir Gawain and the knightly heroes of the Round Table, all passed away without achieving their great purpose of rescue, leaving apparently to after ages their sacred charge; and I surmise it is no far-fetched fancy that we who delight in tales of chivalry, whose pulses are quickened, whose hearts are stirred by the deeds of valiant knights, can easily find much to value in the narrative of the Round Table. For is there not in our time, evil to be conquered? Are there not weak ones in need of assistance and those oppressed and down trodden by man's devices, who call for deliverance?

The knight of the XIX century has no need of coat of mail or sword of steel—his armour must be more secure. But with these old Round Table knights, an unblemished character, a lofty, resolute purpose, a heart filled with love for fellow-men and loyalty to country and king, and a hand ever ready to uplift and strengthen, are still needed qualities. Yes, even in this age of greed and self-seeking, we may find many a Round Table with seats still unoccupied, and may ourselves by noble deeds, become a Sir Galahad or a Sir Launcelot.

BESSIE P. SUTHERN.

A Letter from the Constables.

Editor Citizen:

In the communication signed "Senex," which appeared in your issue of the 9th inst., assertions are made which seriously reflect upon the manner in which we, the undersigned, as officers acting under instructions from the proper authorities, perform our duties. We take it that the insinuations conveyed in the words of the letter reflect not only upon us as officers, but also as citizens, members of the community. It is charged that drunkenness, rowdiness, disorderly conduct, and the insulting of ladies is countenanced, while respectable, law-abiding, courteous young gentlemen, of high standing in the community, are pounced upon and arrested in an outrageous manner, simply because they happen to be members of the Bloomfield bicycle club.

The arrest made by us on the Fourth of July of a young man for violating the ordinance against riding on the sidewalk is denounced by "Senex" as an outrageous transaction. Experience in our line of duty has proved this, that there is scarcely an arrest made in Bloomfield, but what some narrow-minded, self-interested meddler was always ready to denounce it as an outrage; and in this particular case, as in all others, the denunciation is generally some one who is ignorant of the facts, or has only a partial knowledge of them. The young man arrested by us was evidently not one of those included under the panegyric description given by "Senex," law-abiding, respectable, courteous, etc., etc., for he was openly violating the law. He was not arrested for simply riding on that portion of the sidewalk where the exaggerated claims of "Senex" hold that all carriages and bicyclists have a perfect right to be. He was on the sidewalk on Glenwood avenue, south of the railroad track. Another circumstance that evinces that this young man does not come up to that lofty standard pictured by "Senex" is the deceptive statement he made to the officers with regard to the locality in which he belonged. The statement in regard to our failure to arrest that class of offenders who are constantly being complained about, to wit, the drunk and disorderly and those who insult people on the street: Wherever a complaint has been made, and the person has expressed a willingness to substantiate his charge before the proper authority, we have not failed to perform our duty as constables. A great many like to complain, but they fail to back their words with consistent deeds. As regards the legality of the ordinance, that is not for us to question. We followed out our instructions. The Town Committee have opportunity of consulting competent counsel in issuing ordinances, and the presumption is that they have the law on their side.

JAMES FOSTER,

JOHN V. SMITH.

"A Little Brief Authority."

Editor Citizen:

"Senex," in his article in last week's issue, says: "Therefore it appears, imagining the Bloomfield Cyclers to be a kind of Jesse James Club, instead of the respectable, law-abiding and courteous young gentlemen that they are," etc. Now this is all very nice on paper, but as respectable, law-abiding and courteous young gentlemen as they may be in their parents' parlors, they do seem to belong to a "kind of Jesse James Club" when on the wheel. "Senex" to the contrary notwithstanding, a great many people think "the whole transaction" was not "an outrage, inspired by the mistaken zeal of a single member of the Town Council," but a righteous act, and they regret very much to hear that the Town Council has backed down from the ground they were supposed to have taken. It has come to pass that because of

these "cyclers" whose standing in society and their own good sense is all the ordinance that is required to restrain them from infringing the rights, or in the least the comfort of others upon our walks or streets, that at times it is quite unsafe to travel Washington street, for on that street these gentlemen (b) cyclers never take the street, and coming down the hill the "wheel" rolls so silently that the first intimation of danger is a whistle or holler at the pedestrian's back, to give notice that a gentlemanly (b) cyclist has the right of way, and be the person man, woman or child, the walk must be cleared to make room for "the respectable, law-abiding and courteous young gentlemen."

Only this evening, after the arrival of the 5.30 train from town a couple of these gentlemanly cyclers made their appearance on the walk across the railroad, when fully a dozen men, women and children were between the track and Thomas street. Of course the law gave the sidewalk to the gentlemanly cyclers, and they must have it. Several were crowded off the walk, but when others were in front of Mr. Hubbell's a couple of men who thought they had some rights, were behind some ladies, and these men impatiently and impudently kept the walk. The cyclers, being too gentlemanly to run over the party, slowed up as much as they could and kept their balance, demanding the walk. When they came to elm tree one crowded between the trolley and it, and the other, in his choice of running over the people, into his companion, or going into the street, did condescend to choose the latter course, but soon resumed the sidewalk again.

The "justice" acted in the interest of law and decency, and any cyclist who insists on using a walk traveled as much as the cinder crossing between the railroad station and the truck house is, and where the street is as smooth as Glenwood avenue, cannot lay much claim to the title of "gentleman," and ought to have had twice the amount of fine imposed upon him that was done. WEST ENDER.



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